



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

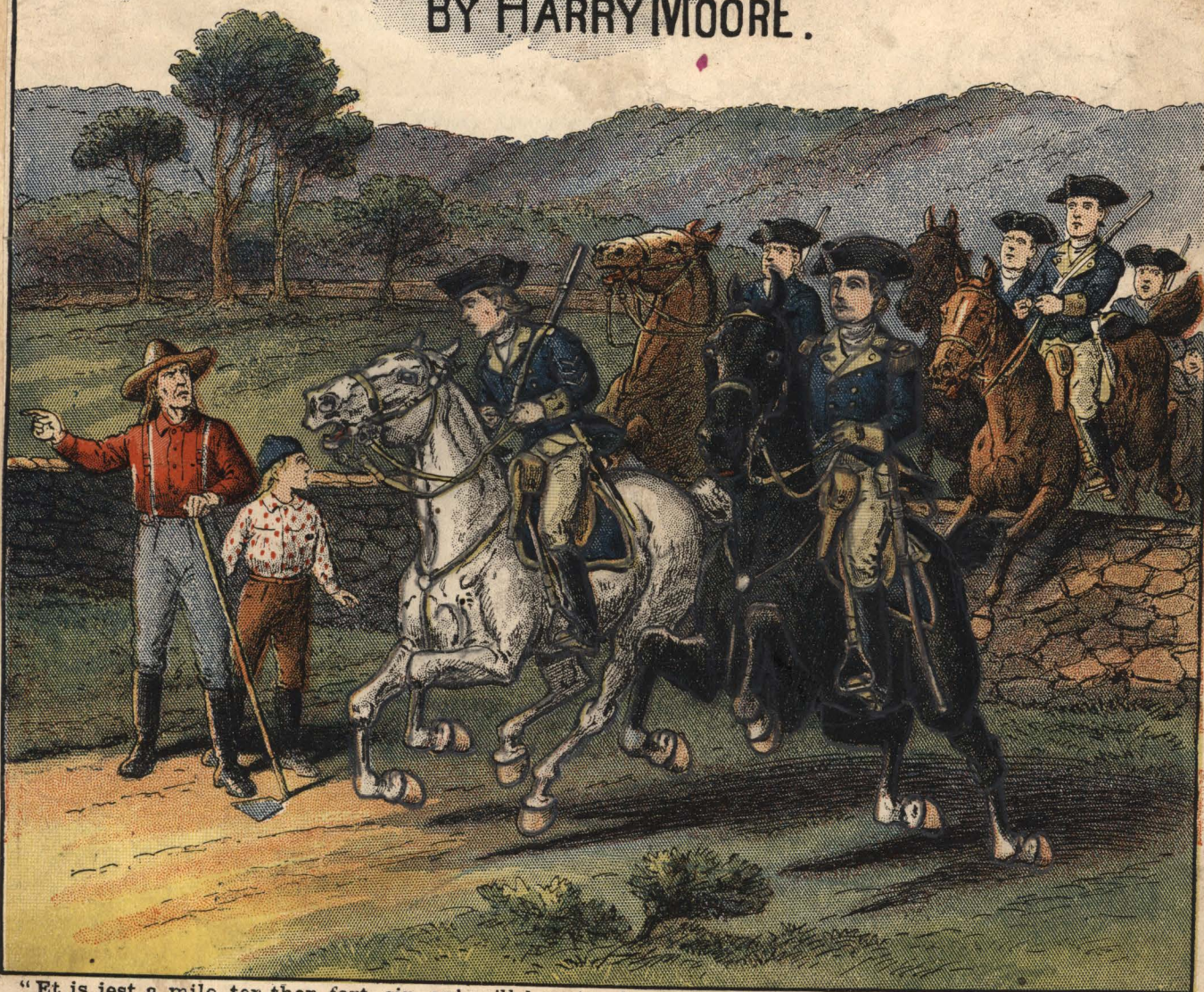
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No. 29.

NEW YORK, JULY 19, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' WILD RIDE; OR A DASH TO SAVE A FORT. BY HARRY MOORE.



"Et is jest a mile ter ther fort, sir, an' ye'll hev ter hurry ef ye want ter git ther in time ter save et from ther redcoats an' Injuns!" the man said. "Forward!" shouted Dick.

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CHAPTER I.

THE START.

"Do you think you can get there in time, my boy?"

"We will try, sir."

"And I know that when you say you will try, you mean it, Dick; still, it is a long distance to ride, and you will have no time to spare. I am informed by special messenger that St. Leger is advancing toward Fort Stanwix steadily, and I fear he will have had time to reduce the fort before you get there."

"How far is it from here, sir?"

"About three hundred miles, Dick."

"Three hundred miles?"

"Yes."

Dick Slater, the champion boy spy of the Revolution, and captain of the company of "Liberty Boys" pondered a few moments.

"Well, we will do the best we can, your excellency," he said, presently; "it may be that Gansevoort may be able to hold St. Leger at bay for a few days, in which event we may reach there in time, after all."

"I hope that you may, Dick. It will be a wild ride, however, if you do succeed, as it will take the most rapid kind of work to reach there in time."

"We are ready to make the dash, your excellency, and if we succeed, we will save the fort; it is certainly worth while making the attempt."

"Yes, indeed; when will you start?"

"Within the hour, your excellency."

"That will be quick work, my boy."

"My men are always ready to start anywhere at an instant's notice, sir."

"That is good. You will not wish to be weighted down by much baggage, anyway."

"No, sir; the country through which we ride will have to furnish us with food."

"Right; let nothing detain you a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. Nothing must be allowed to hold you in check."

"Nothing shall be allowed to do so, sir. The only thing

that could possibly do so would be a superior force of red-coats—and it would have to do some tall fighting, if it succeeded in stopping us."

"I believe you; well, if I do not see you again, good-bye, and Heaven bless you, my boy, and make your errand a success!"

General Washington and Dick Slater, the boy spy, had been holding the above conversation in the commander-in-chief's headquarters, where the patriot army was encamped, not many miles from Philadelphia.

The commander-in-chief, as he finished speaking, shook hands with Dick.

Then, after the exchange of a few more words, Dick saluted, and hastily departed.

He made his way as quickly as possible to the quarters occupied by the company of "Liberty Boys."

The "Liberty Boys" were youths of an average age of eighteen years.

They were bright, handsome, wide-awake fellows, full of life, vim, energy, and always ready to fight at an instant's notice.

They had already earned a great reputation during the time they had been in the army.

As Dick approached where they were, they saw something was in the wind.

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon, and they were lying under the trees in the shade, taking things easy.

It was the latter part of the month of August, and very hot.

One of the "Liberty Boys" leaped to his feet as Dick approached.

He was a handsome fellow, about Dick's age and size. His name was Bob Estabrook, and he was Dick's right-hand man.

He and Dick were lifelong friends and companions, having been playmates ever since they were big enough to play, their parents having lived neighbors for years.

"What's up, Dick?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Something big, Bob!"

Dick's eyes glowed, his face was flushed with excitement and enthusiasm.

"What, Dick?"

"A ride, Bob."

"A ride?"

"Yes; a wild ride!"

All the youths were interested.

They looked at Dick eagerly, and listened to hear every word spoken.

"A wild ride?"

Bob seemed slightly puzzled, as did the rest, also.

"Yes; we must make a dash to save a fort!"

"A dash to save a fort!"

"Yes."

"What fort?"

"Fort Stanwix, Bob."

"Fort Stanwix!"

"Yes."

"Why, that's away up in the Mohawk Valley, in New York!"

Dick nodded.

"Just so," he said; "and we are to go there just as quickly as we can, as the fort is threatened by the British!"

"Phew!"

Bob expressed his surprise in a whistle.

"When do we start, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Immediately!"

"Eh?"

"Yes, at once! So begin getting ready for the trip, boys! We start within the hour!"

"Hurrah!"

The youths could not restrain the cheer.

This was the kind of work they liked.

Action—quick, rapid action was what they liked.

And there promised to be plenty of action in this.

The cheer from the "Liberty Boys" attracted the attention of the other patriot soldiers.

They came hastening to the spot from every portion of the encampment.

"What's up?"

"What's going on here?"

"What are you boys cheering about?"

"What is the matter?"

Many were the questions asked.

The soldiers were eager to learn what had caused the cheering from the "Liberty Boys."

The youths explained as they worked.

They worked rapidly, too.

They rolled up their blankets, filled their canteens with water, and then hastened to get their horses in readiness.

The horses were soon bridled and saddled.

The youths looked to their weapons.

As they were going on such a long ride, and wished to make the fastest possible time, they decided to leave their muskets behind.

Dick secured an extra brace of pistols for each man; however, and in place of the muskets, they buckled on their sabers.

Half an hour from the time Dick appeared among them and told them what was to be done, the "Liberty Boys" were ready for the start.

The news had spread rapidly.

The fact that the "Liberty Boys" were going to try to ride to Fort Stanwix in time to save the fort was known to all.

Many shook their heads.

They did not think it could be done.

"It's a long ride, through a rough country, and a hostile one, too," said many; "they will never reach there in time to do Gansevoort any good!"

"They'll do well if they ever reach there," said others.

"That's right," from others still; "they will have to go through the heart of the country overrun by the hostile Indians! They will be lucky if they succeed in getting through without losing their scalps!"

Such was the idea of the majority.

The youths, however, when spoken to in this strain, only laughed.

"We'll risk it," they said; "we aren't afraid of the Indians!"

"Oh, you young rascals aren't afraid of anything!" said one soldier, in such a tone of comical disgust that all had to laugh.

"Well, what's the use of being afraid?" grinned Bob Estabrook. "We will leave that for the other fellows!"

"Well, they will have reason to be afraid, if they only knew it!" said another soldier, admiringly; "and they'll soon find it out, if they go to bothering you fellows!"

"We hope they will!" laughed Dick, who was tightening the saddle girth, and getting everything in shape for rapid and hard riding.

"You want to look out for the Indians, though, boys," said another soldier, of a careful turn of mind; "you must remember that they are sly scoundrels, and that they will slip up and take you unawares, if they can. They don't fight openly, if they can help it."

"That is true," agreed Dick; "we'll keep our eyes open."

"Yes, we won't let any redskins play tricks on us!" said Sam Sanderson.

"Not a bit of it!" from others of the "Liberty Boys."

It was easy to see in what esteem the "Liberty Boys" were held by their fellow soldiers.

They had endeared themselves to their comrades by their brave fighting, their utter fearlessness on the battlefield, and by their manliness and good-heartedness in camp and on the march.

They were always ready to help a comrade.

This made everyone love them.

There was scarcely a man in the ranks of the entire patriot army who would not have fought for any one of the youths, and fought to the death, if need be.

This was the reason there was so much advice and cautionary talk indulged in by the soldiers.

The youths received the advice and suggestions in good part.

They knew it was inspired by love, and they thanked their comrades for the suggestions and advice, and assured them they would remember it, and be careful.

The youths were ready to start now.

Dick held up his hand.

"All ready?" he asked.

"Ready!" came back in a rousing chorus.

"Good; then mount!"

The youths leaped into the saddles as one man.

They settled themselves firmly in the saddles, gathered up the bridle reins, and looked toward their young leader for the next order.

"Wait," said Dick; "here comes the commander-in-chief. He wished to give me some final instructions, I judge."

Dick handed the bridle reins to Bob, who was next to him, and leaping to the ground, advanced to meet General Washington.

"I wished to say a few words more before you started, Dick," said the commander-in-chief; and then he gave Dick some added instructions.

He also cautioned Dick to be on the lookout against the Indians.

"Don't fall into the hands of Thayendanagea, my boy! If you should do so, your fate, and that of all your brave boys would be sealed!" General Washington said, impressively. "He and his red butchers are more dangerous than the British."

"We will be very careful, your excellency," said Dick; "we shall exercise all possible care, and will not allow ourselves to be taken by surprise. You know, the majority of my boys have grown up in the woods, and have seen Indians since they were little fellows. They are familiar with the redmen and their ways, and I think we shall be much more safe than a band of ordinary soldiers who have not had the experience that we have had."

"True; well, be careful, my boy!"

"We will be very careful, your excellency!"

Then General Washington again shook hands with Dick, and stepping to one side, remained there till the youths started.

As the "Liberty Boys" rode past, he saluted them, and they saluted in return. Then, at the word from Dick, the youths gave three cheers for General Washington.

Hardly had they finished cheering when the commander-in-chief took off his hat, swung it in the air and cried:

"Three cheers for the 'Liberty Boys' of '76!'"

The entire patriot army joined in the cheer which followed, and the sound could easily have been heard more than a mile.

It was a roar exceeding that of the Niagara.

The youths lifted their hats in acknowledgment, and then at a word from Dick, urged their horses into a gallop.

They were headed due north.

They had started—were away on what promised to be a wild ride indeed, a dash of three hundred miles, over hills and through timber and valleys, and, too, through the midst of foes both red and white.

They had started on the dash to save a fort.

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"What do you think of it, Dick?"

"Of what, Bob?"

"Of having three cheers given for us at the instigation of the commander-in-chief himself."

"I think it is a great honor, Bob!"

Dick Slater's handsome face was aglow.

"And so do I think so, Dick!"

"And I!" from Mark Morrison; "there are not many who have been so honored by the commander-in-chief!"

"That is true," agreed Dick; "we seem to have won the liking and admiration of our commander-in-chief, and I hope that we shall be able to retain it to the end."

"I hope so," said Bob.

The "Liberty Boys" were riding northward at a rapid pace.

Their horses were fresh.

They were capable of making good speed.

And the youths were in the mood to get all the speed possible out of the animals.

They talked as they rode along.

Onward the youths rode.

As they dashed past farmhouses, the people ran out and gazed after them in surprise.

Farmers at work in the fields paused and stared in amazement.

Occasionally, where some one happened to be near enough, the question would be shouted: "Where are you going?"

But the youths paid no attention to the actions of the people, nor to the questions asked.

They had business ahead of them, and had no thought for minor things.

Onward they rode.

The clatter of the horses' hoofs could have been heard a long distance.

Onward, hour after hour, the "Liberty Boys" rode.

The horses grew tired, but the youths kept forcing them to keep going at their best speed.

The horses reeked with perspiration.

They panted and showed signs of distress.

Still the youths kept up that wild ride.

They were on their way to try to save a fort—to save the lives of a little band of beleaguered patriots.

They would get there in time if such a thing was possible.

The wild ride was kept up till nearly sundown.

Then Dick instructed the youths to begin dropping out, a half dozen at each farmhouse reached, so as to get supper and give the horses a much-needed rest.

The program was followed out.

The youths riding at the rear dropped out, six at a time, at each farmhouse reached, until at last only Dick, Bob and four more were left.

They, too, stopped at the next farmhouse reached.

Dick leaped to the ground and running to the door of the house, asked the farmer if they could get supper for themselves and feed for their horses.

The farmer said that they could.

Dick wished to look after the horses first of all.

They were led to the stable, where they were quickly rubbed down and given some water, and then feed.

Then the youths went to the house, and were soon eating supper, which the farmer's wife had hastened to prepare for them.

The farmer seemed interested in the youths.

He had manifested considerable interest when he saw the condition in which the horses were.

He knew the animals had been ridden far and fast.

He had asked a few questions at the stable, but Dick had put him off, and now when the farmer began again, when the youths were at the table, Dick quietly discouraged asking of questions.

The "Liberty Boys," as a safeguard, were not in uniform.

They were dressed in citizens' clothing.

This made it impossible for the farmer to make up his mind regarding whether or not the youths were loyalists or patriots.

He tried to find out by making cautious inquiries, but was foiled neatly at every turn.

Dick shrewdly guessed that the farmer was a Tory.

His talk seemed to indicate it.

Of course, the farmer did not intend to say or do anything that would give an inkling of which side he was on, but he was dealing with an unusually shrewd youth—who could read between the lines, as it were.

This, of course, put Dick on his guard.

He did not think the farmer could do anything to interfere with them or their purpose, even if he were to learn who they were and where they were going, but at the same time he felt that it was best to be on the safe side.

So he put the man off, with evasive answers, whenever he asked any leading questions.

The youths had nearly finished their suppers, when there came the sound of trampling feet outside.

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" looked up quickly.

They looked at the farmer inquiringly.

They did not think it was time for the other "Liberty Boys," who had dropped off, at different farmhouses along the road, to be coming.

Who, then, could it be?

There must certainly be a number of persons, if the sound of the footsteps was anything to go by.

Dick, who was a good judge of faces, was sure he detected a look of triumph on the face of the farmer.

He gave a signal to the other five youths, and as one man they leaped to their feet, and stepped back against the wall, at the end of the room.

At the same instant the door opened, and nearly a score of men entered the room.

They filed in, one after another.

At their head was a youth, with an ugly, forbidding cast of countenance.

At sight of him Dick and Bob started and exchanged looks.

They knew the youth.

His name was Scroggs—Joe Scroggs, and he had lived

not far from where they had spent most of their lives. This was within a few miles of Tarrytown, in Westchester County, N. Y.

Joe Scroggs was an old-time enemy of the youths.

He and Dick had had more than one encounter.

Dick had given the youth a good thrashing on each of those occasions.

Dick could not think what Joe could be doing away down here in Pennsylvania.

It was evident that Joe recognized Dick and Bob.

The vicious, triumphant look on his face as he eyed them proved this.

The farmer at whose house the youths had eaten supper was the first to speak.

"Well," he said, looking at Dick, whom he seemed to instinctively recognize as the leader, "now what do you think of it?"

"I don't know what you mean?" replied Dick, quietly.

"Oh, you don't?"

"I do not."

The farmer smiled, and Joe Scroggs grinned in a self-satisfied manner.

"Then I will explain so you will understand. What do you think of your chances for escaping the neat little trap which we have sprung on you?"

Dick pretended to suddenly become aware of the situation.

"Oh, this is a trap, then, is it?" he asked, coolly.

The farmer and the men who had entered the room with Joe seemed somewhat surprised at the coolness of the youth.

The farmer nodded.

"Yes, it's a trap; and I flatter myself that it is a neat one. You thought you were very shrewd, and that you was fooling me by not answering my questions, while all the time I was laughing in my sleeve on account of the manner in which I was fooling you."

"Oh, you were?"

Dick's tone was calm, his air the same.

"Yes. I knew you were 'rebels' all the time; and I was just asking you questions to pass the time away until these men could get here," and he indicated the men with a gesture.

"Oh, you're up a stump, Dick Slater an' Bob Estabrook!" said Joe Scroggs, viciously.

"Do you really think so, Joe?" asked Dick quietly.

"I know it!"

"You mean that you think you know it!" said Bob, scornfully.

"No; I know it. Why, what could the six of you do against twenty of us?"

"A good deal, perhaps!"

Joe laughed scornfully, as did the men who had come with him.

They seemed to think there was not much possibility that the youths could do anything.

"What are you doing, away down here in Pennsylvania?" asked Dick.

"Oh, I'm down here on a visit."

"On a visit?"

"Yes; this man is my uncle."

Joe nodded toward the farmer.

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yep. An' I'm awful glad I happened to be heer, too!" with a triumphant grin; "et gived me a chance ter git even with you two fellers."

"To get even with us?"

"Yes; fur whut ye done ter me—well, ye know when et wuz, an' whut et wuz ye done."

"Yes, and we know what it was you did, too, you cowardly scoundrel!" exclaimed Bob.

Joe frowned, and glowered at Bob in an angry fashion.

"Ye better be keerful how ye talks ter me!" he growled; "ye mought git hurt!"

"There is no danger of your hurting us, at any rate!" in a scornful tone; "you are too big a coward to make the attempt!"

Some of the men snickered.

Joe got red in the face. He was so mad that he seemed on the point of choking.

"Ye'd better be keerful!" he growled, "er I may take et inter me head ter show ye whether I'm afeered er not!"

Bob laughed.

"Do it, Joe!" he said; "please do! I'd like a chance to knock the head half off of you!"

"That will do!" cried the farmer; "this talk doesn't amount to anything."

Then he turned to Dick.

"My nephew saw you when you rode up," he said, "and he told me who you were. That is how I came to know you were rebels."

"Oh, that's it, eh?" remarked Dick.

"Yes; so I told him to slip out the back way and gather the men together and bring them here as quickly as possible, in order that we might capture you."

"Oh, you did?"

"Yes."

"And it is your purpose to make us prisoners?"

"That is our purpose."

Dick glanced along the line of men and his lips curled as he said:

"I suppose you think, of course, that you will have no difficulty in making prisoners of us?"

The farmer nodded.

"It is reasonable to think so, is it not?" he asked.

"I can't say that I think so, no."

The farmer looked surprised.

"Why," he said; "we are three to one."

Dick laughed, as did Bob and the other "Liberty Boys."

"That doesn't make any difference," said Dick, quietly.

The farmer, as well as the men, looked more surprised than ever.

"You say that doesn't make any difference?" the man remarked.

"Not a bit!"

Dick was not as a rule much given to talking.

He had reasons for wishing to talk now, however.

He wished to delay action on the part of the farmer and the band of Tories as long as possible, in order to give his "Liberty Boys" time to come along.

Those who had been left behind at the various farm-houses would be coming pretty soon, and if he could keep the farmer from ordering the attack till then he and his companions would be all right.

Instead of being captured by the Tories, Dick and his "Liberty Boys" could capture the Tories.

Of course Joe Scroggs and his uncle—none of the men, in fact, could have the least suspicion that there were more of the youths than the six within the house.

So if Dick could delay action on their part, it would be easy to take the Tories by surprise.

The farmer, not knowing what was in Dick's mind, thought the youth was merely making a show of bravado.

He felt confident that he and his companions could easily overcome the six youths.

True, he was aware that two of the six were the youths who had made such wonderful reputations as scouts, spies and fighters, but this did not have much effect on him. He had complete confidence that twenty of them could overcome six, no matter how great might be the prowess of the six.

Which showed how little he knew with whom he was dealing.

Dick did not wish to be forced to engage in a combat with the Tories, however, at such odds.

Had it been necessary he would have done so quickly enough, but he felt that if he could stave off the encounter

for a little while, there would be no occasion for entering into it at all.

Dick's statement to the effect that the odds did not make any difference seemed to have the effect of angering the farmer.

"Surrender!" he cried; "hold up your hands, and all will be well; otherwise we will make you prisoners by force! Do you surrender?"

"No!" cried Dick, in a firm, ringing voice.

This made the farmer angrier than ever.

"At them, boys!" he cried to the Tories. "Down with the rebels!"

The men rushed forward to attack the "Liberty Boys."

CHAPTER III.

TURNING THE TABLES ON THE TORIES.

Instantly the youths whipped out their pistols and leveled them.

"Back!" cried Dick, in a commanding voice; "back! or you are dead men!"

There was something so menacing in the appearance of the six youths that the Tories paused.

They shrank back from the muzzles of the pistols.

Doubtless each man thought that if the youths fired, he would be one of the persons who would be killed.

This made cowards of them all.

Their greater number did not seem to be such an advantage as had been supposed.

They looked from the youths to the farmer, who was clearly their leader.

The look was a mute question regarding their course of action.

They did not know what they should do.

When the youths whipped out their pistols, Joe Scroggs had made a sudden dive for the door, and had leaped out of the room in a hurry.

He went out much after the fashion of a frog leaping into a pool of water.

His uncle was made of sterner material, however.

He stood his ground.

He glared at Dick and his companion eagerly.

"You are fools!" he cried.

"Fools?" remarked Dick, still willing to talk, and thus kill time, and give the other "Liberty Boys" time to get there.

"Yes, fools!"

"Why so?"

"Why, for making an attempt to resist."

"I don't think so."

"Well, I do! You cannot stand against us!"

"Why can't we?"

"For the reason that we are twenty to your six."

"That is nothing!"

"Nothing?"

"Nothing at all! We have stood up against greater odds than that, many a time."

"I don't believe it!"

"It is a fact, nevertheless."

"Then the men you stood up against must have been cowards. You can't stand before us!"

"I think we can!"

"You are a fool!"

"Thank you!" sarcastically.

"Lay down your pistols!"

The farmer's tone was fierce and threatening.

"Lay down the pistols?"

Dick's tone was cool and calm.

"Yes!"

Dick shook his head.

"We will do nothing of the kind!"

There was no lack of decision in Dick's tone.

There was a grim look about his mouth, too, that was unmistakable.

It showed plainly that he meant what he said.

The man seemed to realize it, for he said:

"It will be the worse for you, then!"

"I don't think so!"

"You will think differently before the affair is ended. We have weapons, too!"

"Any attempt on the part of your men to draw weapons will be the signal for us to open fire!"

Dick's voice was not loud, but it had a deadly, determined sound that proved the speaker meant every word.

Dick was watching the men closely.

He saw that the Tories were uneasy.

They were not soldiers; but were farmers who lived in the vicinity.

They had doubtless never been fired upon, and the thought of being made targets by these cool youths was disquieting to them.

They shifted from one foot to another.

Dick did not believe they would stand and take more than one volley, but he had no desire to kill any of the fellows, so hoped that there would be no clash before the

"Liberty Boys" reached there. Then the Tories would be only too glad to avoid an encounter.

It was evident that the farmer, Joe Scroggs' uncle, was brave enough.

Dick realized that, had all the men been possessed of his courage, there would have been trouble ere this.

The man realized that his men were hardly to be depended on, in case the youths opened fire.

He seemed to understand this, for he hesitated to give the order for them to draw their weapons, or for them to attack the youths.

"The best thing you can do," said Dick, quietly, "is for you to give your men instructions to go quietly back to their homes. If you try to push matters here, you will be instrumental in causing the death of a number of them."

The men looked uneasy—more so than ever.

They looked sidewise at their leader.

It was evident from the expression on their faces that they did not wish him to give the order for them to draw their weapons, nor to attack the youths.

The coolness of the youths, and their undaunted bearing had made a great impression on the Tories.

The fellows began to understand that they would be taking their lives in their hands, if they made an attack on the youths.

The farmer, however, was not disposed to give up the idea of capturing the youths.

"Out with your weapons, men!" he cried; "they won't dare shoot!—and if they do we can shoot them down!"

"You will find out!" cried Dick; "if you value your lives, men, don't try to draw weapons!"

They seemed to value their lives.

All save the leader.

He started to draw a pistol.

Dick saw the movement.

He waited till the man had almost got the pistol out, and then he fired a single shot.

Dick was a fine shot with a pistol.

He could put a ball just about where he wished to.

The bullet from his pistol struck the man in the arm.

The pistol was knocked out of the man's hand—or, rather, the shock caused him to drop it.

He gave utterance to a wild cry of pain and rage commingled.

"O-h-h-h-h-h!" he howled, dancing about; "you've broken my arm! O-o-o-o-o-h!"

"Served you right!" said Dick, quietly; "didn't I warn you?"

"Curses on you!" the man cried! "at them, men!" he ordered, fiercely; "at them! Beat them down! Kill them!"

But the men made no move toward obeying.

They had just witnessed the display of skill on the part of Dick, and they had no desire to be used as a target.

They realized that Dick could have killed the man, had he desired to do so.

And they feared that he might take a notion to shoot to kill, if they started to make an attack.

When the wounded man saw that the men were not going to obey his order, he became angry at them.

"You cowards!" he cried; "you poor, contemptible cowards! Why don't you do what I tell you to do?"

"An' git shot like you did!" growled one of the men.

"Or worse!" from another.

"They have a great deal more sense than you have!" said Dick, quietly. "If they should attack us, it would mean the death of a number of them. They are wise in refusing to obey your order."

"They are cowards, the worst kind of cowards!" the farmer cried; "I'm ashamed of you!" he added, addressing them.

"That's all right; you kin be ashamed uv us if you want to be!" said one, doggedly.

"That's right!" from still another; "we don't care about dying jest yit!"

Just then Joe Scroggs stuck his head in through the open doorway.

"Uncle!" he called, in a frightened voice.

The man turned toward the youth almost fiercely.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked.

"I—I—w-want ter t-tell ye sumthin'."

Joe was plainly badly frightened.

He kept a wary eye on Dick and his companions.

Joe was ready to dodge and flee at the first signs of hostility on the part of the six "Liberty Boys."

"Well, tell it!" growled Joe's uncle. "What is it?"

"I—h-heer ther soun's uv horses' hoofbeats a-comin' frum up ther road!"

"Good!" his uncle cried; "it is some more of the men coming to help us. I hope that if a dozen or so more men come you will pluck up courage enough to attack these young scoundrels!"

When Joe said he heard the sound of horses' hoofbeats coming up the road the youths looked significantly at each other.

They were sure they knew what that meant.

The "Liberty Boys" were coming.

The leader of the Tories evidently thought the horse-

men approaching were some more Tories, but Dick and the other youths were sure he was mistaken.

It was certainly time for the "Liberty Boys" to be coming, so it was more than probable that the newcomers would turn out to be their comrades, and not the friends of the Tory.

"Go out and tell them to hurry in here, Joe!" ordered the Tory leader.

There was a fierce tone of satisfaction to his voice.

He was anticipating speedy revenge on Dick for wounding him.

Joe Scroggs disappeared from the open doorway.

All within the house stood still and listened.

Soon the hoofbeats could be plainly heard.

The horsemen were close at hand.

Dick and his comrades were accustomed to hearing the trampling of many horses' feet, and were better able to judge of the number of horsemen approaching than were the farmers.

They knew there must be nearly a hundred horsemen coming, and this was proof sufficient that the newcomers were the "Liberty Boys."

Closer and closer came the horsemen.

Presently the trampling sounded almost at the door of the house.

The next instant Joe Scroggs came bounding through the open doorway.

His hat was off, his hair was standing almost on end.

His eyes stuck out, till it would have been possible to have knocked them off with a stick.

It was evident that he was scared almost to death.

"What's the matter?" cried his uncle, seizing the youth, and giving him a jerk.

Joe was trying to speak.

His lips were working, but no sound issued forth.

He was so frightened that he could not speak.

Again his uncle gave him a jerk.

"What is it? What's the matter?" cried the man.

Joe nodded toward the door.

"W-we'll a-all b-be k-killed!" Joe gasped.

"All be killed? What do you mean?"

The sound of the trampling feet of the horses was no longer heard now.

The horsemen had come to a stop in front of the house.

"T-theer's er-erbout er h-hundred more uv t-them f-fellers o-out t-theer!"

Joe managed to nod towards Dick and his comrades as he spoke.

"What!" exclaimed his uncle, in a tone of alarm.

Cries of fear escaped the other Tories.

They whirled and started to run out of the room and house.

They found themselves confronted by a crowd of youths, who had just approached.

They could not get out without forcing their way through this crowd.

"Stand where you are!" cried Dick, in a stern, ringing voice; "you are my prisoners!"

The Tories, and especially Joe Scroggs' uncle, stared at Dick as if hardly knowing what to think.

"What do you mean?" the man managed to gasp; "we your prisoners? Absurd!"

"Not absurd by any means!" replied Dick; "those are my 'Liberty Boys,' and there are a hundred of them! You cannot escape, and might as well surrender!"

A murmur of consternation and fear went up from the Tories.

CHAPTER IV.

TWO HORSES' NEIGHS.

They realized that they were in a trap.

They saw that they were helpless.

They could not hope to do anything against a hundred.

To attempt to escape would be to insure the death of many of them.

"We surrender!" cried one.

"Yes, yes!" was the cry; "we surrender!"

"Cowards!" cried the uncle of Joe Scroggs.

"They are not cowards, but sensible men," said Dick quietly. "They would be foolish to try to offer resistance, or make their escape."

Then Dick gave the order for his men to step back from the doorway and form a hollow square.

The youths obeyed.

Then Dick ordered the Tories to march out of the house. They obeyed.

When they were out of doors, they found themselves surrounded by the "Liberty Boys."

Joe Scroggs and his uncle had passed out through the doorway, along with the rest.

The man had grumbled and muttered, but he did not dare refuse to do as Dick ordered.

He realized that even had his Tories been brave men, and experienced fighters, they would have had no chance against five times their number.

When all the Tories had passed through the doorway, Dick took up a position in the doorway.

Just as he was about to address the Tories he felt a pull at his sleeve.

He looked around and saw the wife of the Tory farmer.

He had forgotten all about the woman, but remembered now that he had seen her run into another room as soon as the trouble began, when the Tories first appeared.

"What is it?" asked Dick, in a low, not unkindly tone.

"Please, sir," the poor woman said, in a trembling voice, "don't take my husband away a prisoner! Don't mind what he says. He is a good husband, if he is a Tory, and I don't know what I should do if you took him away from me!"

Dick felt sorry for the woman.

"I'll see what I can do," he replied in a low voice.

Then he turned and looked out upon the Tories.

It was not so dark but that he could see the men fairly well.

"I suppose you realize," he said, "the fact that you are in our power; that you are helpless?"

The men seemed to realize it, for several of them said as much.

"You are in our power," Dick went on, "but I feel like being easy with you for the reason that I know you are not active enemies to the cause. I know that you are farmers of this vicinity, men who have families, and I have a proposition to make to you if you wish to listen to it."

The men were evidently too glad to listen, for several of them cried:

"Go on!"

"Let us hear your proposition."

"We're willin' to listen."

"Yes, yes!"

"Very well," said Dick; "my proposition is this: If you will each and every one of you promise, pledge yourselves that you will not again turn your hands against the patriots during the continuance of this war, I will let you go free. All who are willing to accept the proposition will please lift their right hand."

Instantly a score of hands were raised.

Dick was silent a few moments, during which time he looked to see if all had their hands up. Then he told the "Liberty Boys" to open up and let the Tories through.

"I am going to take you by your promise," Dick said, quietly; "and I hope you will remember the promise and abide by it."

The Tories said they would do so, and they quickly availed themselves of the opportunity for getting away.

They passed through the gap made by the parting of the ranks of the "Liberty Boys" and hastened away, quickly disappearing in the darkness.

When all were gone, save Joe Scroggs and his uncle, Dick turned to them.

"I suppose you are willing to give the same promise as the rest have given?" Dick asked the man.

The man shook his head.

He was a brave man, and a stubborn one.

Dick had taken note of the fact that he had not lifted his hand when the other Tories had done so.

"I will give no such promise," he said.

"Come, come!" said Dick, persuasively; "it will be best for you to do so."

Again the man shook his head.

"I will not do it!" he declared.

"You absolutely refuse to do so?" asked Dick, in a grim, threatening voice.

"I absolutely refuse!"

"Oh, John! John! please give the young man the promise!" pleaded the man's wife, appearing in the doorway.

"I won't do it!" the man said obstinately.

"You are very foolish!" said Dick; "come, give the promise, and then go in and let your wife dress your wound. It may turn out to be serious if neglected too long."

"I shall give no such promise!"

The man's tone was firm.

"Please do," pleaded his wife.

"You had better, Uncle John!" said Joe, who was very much afraid of Dick and Bob.

"Yes, it will be best, sir," said Dick.

But the man was stubborn.

He refused to give the promise.

Dick felt sorry for the woman, and presently he said:

"Well, come into the house and let us have a look at your wounded arm."

"I'll take care of my arm!" the man growled; "I don't ask any help from you!"

"Oh, very well," said Dick.

Then he turned to his comrades.

"We are in such a hurry that we cannot afford to fool away any more time here," he said. "Wait till we get our horses and we will start."

He and his five companions hastened to the stable and soon returned, leading their horses.

Dick stepped to the doorway and looked in.

The woman was binding up the wounded arm of her husband.

"For your wife's sake I am going to let you retain your freedom. I hope you will be thankful enough to cause

you to be careful in the future, and that you will refrain from taking any part in operations against the patriots."

As Dick said this the man looked and glared at the youth.

"Never you mind about me!" he growled; "I'll take care of myself. And as for you, if ever I get the chance at you I'll get even with you for giving me this sore arm, you see if I don't."

"Oh, very well!" said Dick; "all right, if that is the way you feel about it. Next time I shall not aim at your arm!"

Then Dick turned away from the doorway.

He mounted his horse, the other "Liberty Boys" doing the same.

"Forward all!" cried Dick.

Then the "Liberty Boys" dashed away up the road.

They were off again on that wild ride to save a fort.

Half an hour at least had been lost at the farmhouse on account of the Tories.

And time was precious.

Dick urged his horse forward at a rapid pace.

The other youths did likewise.

Dick was the one who made the pace always; then the others simply kept up with him.

Onward they rode.

As it happened there was a moon.

It was now coming up high enough to give some light.

It rendered considerable assistance, as the road was a strange one to the youths.

All Dick could do was to keep headed in a northerly direction.

By so doing, he knew he must ultimately come out in the vicinity of the point they were trying to reach, since Fort Stanwix was nearly due north from the point from which they had started.

The country through which they had been riding was very rough.

It was indeed mountainous.

This, of course, made it hard on the horses to keep up a good speed:

The youths did not spare their animals, however.

Human lives were at stake, and it was necessary that the lives of the horses should be sacrificed rather than that the fort should be reached too late.

Still Dick hoped this would not be necessary.

Onward through the night dashed the "Liberty Boys."

As they dashed past farmhouses dogs would rush out and bark wildly.

In some instances people came rushing out of the houses

and stared after the band of horsemen with wondering eyes.

The youths stopped for nothing.

Up hill and down hill they raced.

It was indeed a wild ride.

This was kept up till about three o'clock in the morning.

At that time the horses were foaming.

They were panting, almost exhausted.

Dick realized that the animals would have to have a rest.

Himself and comrades were in need of a few hours sleep, also.

So he called a halt.

The youths dismounted.

They first rubbed their horses down, to keep them from catching cold.

Then they tied the animals in such a fashion that they could crop the grass by the roadside.

This done, the youths unrolled their blankets, spread them on the ground, and lying down, were soon asleep.

It seemed to Dick that he had scarcely closed his eyes before he was awakened by the neighing of a horse.

Dick raised on his elbow and listened.

It was one of the horses belonging to the party that had neighed.

But, hark!

An answering neigh came back from over the hill to the northward.

At first thought Dick was startled.

Then the thought came to him that the horse was one belonging to a farmer.

"It is not likely that there would be any redcoats in this vicinity," he said to himself.

He dropped back and had almost got asleep again, when one of the horses gave utterance to a shrill neigh.

Almost immediately an answering neigh came from over the hill.

Dick was wide awake in an instant.

He decided to investigate and see where the horses were.

Dick rose silently to his feet.

He did not wish to awaken any of the "Liberty Boys."

They needed all the rest that it was possible for them to secure.

The youth stole away.

He had to pick his way for a few rods, as the youths were stretched out all around, and there was danger that he might step on some of them.

He finally got past the youths, however.

Then he stole away up the road.

The moon had gone down.

It was quite dark.

Dick had not much difficulty in keeping in the road, however.

He advanced cautiously.

He did not know what he might find.

He felt that it was best to be cautious.

He had found this to be the best plan always.

He worked his way slowly and steadily up toward the brow of the hill.

At either side of the road scraggy bushes and small trees were growing.

Dick was on the alert.

He realized the fact that if enemies were near, the brush at the side of the road would furnish them with an excellent ambush, from which to leap upon him as he came along.

Dick could see faintly—just sufficient so that he thought he would be enabled to see an enemy in time to protect himself from an attack.

Dick could not explain why it was that he suspected the presence of an enemy, or enemies, but he did suspect it.

Consequently he was on the alert.

All his faculties were aroused.

Presently Dick approached the top of the hill.

Still nothing had been seen or heard that was suspicious.

Just as Dick reached the top of the hill, however, he was treated to a surprise.

A startling one.

He saw, not ten feet in front of him, the dim outlines of a human being.

A human being there, at that time of the night, must be an enemy, Dick was sure.

He acted upon this theory, at any rate.

With the leap of a panther, Dick was upon the fellow.

CHAPTER V.

THE DRAGOONS.

Dick could not see very well, of course, but he made a grab for the fellow's throat.

He wished to seize the man by the throat and make it impossible for him to cry out.

Dick was confident that the fellow was, like himself, a member of a party not far distant, and that he had heard the neighing of the "Liberty Boys' " horse, and had started out to investigate.

Dick wished to bring the fellow's investigations to an end right here.

More by good luck than otherwise, Dick succeeded in getting the man by the throat.

He soon had occasion to congratulate himself on his good fortune in this respect.

Dick's opponent was a large man.

He was also a powerful one.

He was stronger than Dick.

The youth soon realized this.

The man was about the most powerful fellow Dick had ever encountered.

Few, indeed, were the men who were the equal of the "Liberty Boys" in a hand-to-hand combat.

Dick was phenomenally strong for a youth—was stronger than the majority of men; in addition he was quick as a flash of lightning and as active as a cat.

He was moreover skilled in tricks of the wrestler's art.

This made him a dangerous opponent for any man.

The fellow whom Dick had seized grappled with the youth, instantly.

Then the two began a desperate struggle for the mastery.

Dick quickly realized that the man was his superior as far as brute strength was concerned.

He was quick and active, too, for a big man.

The youth quickly realized that, without some disadvantage, he would be defeated by the fellow.

The realization did not bother him greatly.

The reason was because he had already secured the advantage.

He had secured his favorite, deadly hold—on the throat of his opponent.

Dick felt confident that if he could maintain his hold, he would triumph.

And it was imperative that he should maintain it.

Should he fail, the fellows would be enabled to shout and give warning to the comrades who, Dick was certain, were near at hand.

So although his opponent made desperate efforts to break the hold, Dick held on with all his might.

The combat was waged in almost absolute silence.

The only noise was made by the hard breathing of the two combatants, and the slight shuffling of their feet as they moved first in one direction, then the other.

The man tried to force Dick to the ground by sheer weight and strength.

Dick resisted the fellows' efforts successfully, however.

He would not let himself be thrown, if he could help it.

He could make a better fight while on his feet.

Dick knew wherein lay his advantage.

It was in retaining the hold on the man's throat.

He could strangle the fellow gradually, and this would weaken him.

When a man cannot get his breath, he soon becomes weak.

And Dick was doing his best to keep the man from breathing.

He tightened his grip, and squeezed the man's throat until the clutching hand must have felt to the fellow like a vise gripping his throat.

It took some time, but the youth presently became convinced that his opponent was losing strength.

The fellow began gasping and making desperate efforts to break hold on his throat.

He could not do it.

Dick pressed his advantage.

He squeezed tighter and tighter.

The man struggled fiercely.

He acted like one who felt that he was battling for his life.

Doubtless he thought that Dick intended to choke him to death, if it was possible to do so.

He fought fiercely.

He came very near breaking Dick's hold once or twice, but the youth managed to prevent him from doing so.

Finding he could not succeed, the man seemed to suddenly lose his courage; with it went his strength, and in a few seconds longer he collapsed.

He stopped struggling, and went limp and helpless so suddenly that Dick was suspicious at first. He thought the fellow was playing a trick on him, to get him to loosen his hold.

So he held on as tightly as possible.

The man fell in a heap on the ground, however, and lay there, so limp and lifeless-like, that Dick became convinced that there was no shamming.

Dick released his hold on the man's throat instantly.

He had no desire to encompass the fellow's death.

All he cared for was to keep the man from giving the alarm.

Dick pondered a moment.

What should he do?

He decided that the first thing to do was to make sure that his late opponent should not raise an alarm.

Dick could not see to do any good, but he stooped down and felt of the insensible man's clothing.

He made up his mind that the man had on a British uniform.

He had on a belt, in which were two pistols of the dragoon variety.

"He is a British dragoon!—I am sure of it!" thought Dick; "and where there is one, there also will be found others. I must investigate, and if there is a large party, we must get away from this vicinity in a hurry!"

Dick quickly removed the belt from around the man's waist.

Then he quickly wrapped it around the man's arms in such a manner that he would be unable to get them free.

Next Dick took a handkerchief from the fellow's pocket and stuffed it into his mouth. Then he bound his own handkerchief over the fellow's mouth, to keep the other handkerchief in.

"There, I guess that will keep him from raising an alarm," said Dick to himself.

Then the youth lifted the man, and carrying him out to one side of the road, laid him down in the grass.

"Now to see where his comrades are, and how many there are of them," the youth thought.

He stole away down the hillside.

He followed the road.

He had not gone far before he came within sight of a smouldering camp fire.

He caught sight of it between the trees.

He stole forward.

The camp fire was away down at the foot of the hill.

It took Dick several minutes to reach the vicinity of what was evidently a camp.

At last, however, Dick was near enough so that he could make a survey of the encampment.

The camp fire, although almost out, threw out a little light, and Dick was enabled to see dark forms lying here and there on the ground.

He counted as well as he could, and then moved around, in a sort of circling manner.

Dick spent several minutes at this work, and finally decided that it was an encampment of redcoat dragoons.

There were at least a hundred of the redcoats, Dick judged.

He asked himself what should be done.

Should he and his "Liberty Boys" attack the redcoats?

Dick decided not to do so.

"We are bound on a special mission," he thought; "we are in a great hurry. We must let nothing divert our attention. We might capture the entire party, but what would we do with them, after we got them? No! we will get away from here in a hurry, and not risk being delayed. We will return, awaken the boys, and we will be off at once."

Just as Dick came to this decision he was startled by hearing a series of loud calls for help.

The cries came from the top of the hill, in the direction of the spot where he had left the prisoner.

Instantly Dick knew what had happened.

The redcoat had regained consciousness, and had managed in some manner to get the handkerchief out of his mouth.

He was now yelling, in order to try to arouse his comrades.

He succeeded.

While Dick stood there dismayed, the men lying about, began to stir.

A number leaped to their feet.

Dick realized that this was no place for him.

He bounded away up the road.

Several of the redcoats got a fleeting glimpse of the youth, and they set up a shout.

They hardly knew what was in the wind, but they were imbued with the idea that the fleeing person was an enemy.

So they gave utterance to yells, and then two or three, more excitable or reckless, fired their pistols.

Dick heard two or three bullets whistle past his head.

"The entire party will be after me in a minute!" thought Dick. "I must hasten and get the boys mounted, and then, if possible, we will get away without an encounter; if not possible, however, we will cut our way through, if necessary!"

He was soon at the top of the hill.

The prisoner was kicking around, and yelling with all his might.

Dick did not pause an instant, however.

The fellow had already done all the damage he could do.

He had aroused his comrades, and it would do no good to try to quiet him.

Dick darted on past and down the hill.

He went with the speed of the wind.

He was soon at the place where the "Liberty Boys" lay.

A number of them were on their feet when Dick got there, however.

They had heard the cries of the man on the hill, and were wondering what it was all about.

"Quick!" cried Dick; "wake the boys up, and mount as quickly as possible! There is a band of redcoat dragoons just over the hill! We must get away without getting into a fight with them, if possible!"

The youths hastened to awaken those who had not been aroused by the cries of the redcoat who had been made prisoner by Dick.

Dick gave the order to mount.

All rushed to where their horses were tethered.

They untied the horses, and leaped into the saddles, these having been thrown on hastily and fastened.

"Forward!" cried Dick.

He dashed up the road at a gallop.

The "Liberty Boys" followed with a rush.

Dick had decided at the last moment to not retreat, in order to avoid the redcoats.

He knew that by doing this they might have to go several miles out of their way.

This would entail the loss of considerable time.

And in the journey they were on, time was valuable.

Dick had made up his mind to risk getting safely through the redcoat lines.

He reasoned that the dragoons would hasten up the hill afoot.

They would wish to learn what was ailing their comrade who was making such an outcry.

They would not, of course, think to mount their horses.

So Dick reasoned that it would be not a difficult matter, or a dangerous one to ride through their ranks.

And to go on in the direction they wished to go, the "Liberty Boys" would have to go through the redcoat lines.

Their way lay toward the north.

Up the hill the "Liberty Boys" dashed.

As Dick anticipated, they ran into the redcoats when they reached the top of the hill.

The British dragoons had reached there, and were in the act of freeing the arms of their comrade.

It was now so well along toward morning, that the first rays of the rising sun were dispelling the darkness to such an extent that it is possible to see the redcoats—indistinctly, true, but still sufficiently so that it was possible to distinguish the dragoons.

The redcoats had not received much information from their trussed-up comrade, so really had not much idea what was in the wind until they saw the "Liberty Boys" almost on top of them.

Then they uttered yells, and attempted to draw their pistols.

"Onward!" shouted Dick; "don't stop for anything! Ride right over the top of the fellows!"

The "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to cheers, and put spurs to their horses.

As they struck the line of the dragoons, yells and curses went up from the fellows.

Then the crack! crack! crack! of pistols was heard.

Some of the redcoats had succeeded in drawing pistols, and had fired the shots.

CHAPTER VI.

CHASED.

One or two of the "Liberty Boys" were wounded.

Luckily, however, not one was killed, or even seriously wounded.

The dragoons, being on foot, did not impede the progress of the horses to any marked extent, and it did not take long for the "Liberty Boys" to ride through and over their enemies.

They drew pistols and fired a volley or two, also.

Some of the dragoons went down.

Then the "Liberty Boys" were away.

They went down the hill with a rush.

They were willing to get away without having to engage in a battle with dragoons, for the reason that they did not wish to lose any time.

Dick was in a hurry to get to Fort Stanwix.

Every moment lost in delay might be important, as an hour's delay in reaching the fort might mean the loss of the fort and the loss of its defenders.

Down the hill rode the youths at a gallop, and behind them rose a wild yell as the redcoats realized that their enemies were about to escape them.

Looking back, Dick took note of the fact that the dragoons were running back down the hill toward their encampment.

"Surely the fools will not try to follow us," he thought.

It looked as if the redcoats might have some such intentions.

The redcoats hastily got their horses out, mounted and set out in pursuit.

It was now rapidly becoming light enough so that it was possible to see quite a distance and fairly distinctly.

The sun was almost up.

The "Liberty Boys" had secured a start of more than a quarter of a mile.

"They're coming as fast they can make their horses go, Dick," said Bob, after a backward glance.

"So they are, Bob."

"Do you think they can catch us?"

"I don't know, Bob; it depends on how fresh their horses are, compared to our own."

"We have ridden ours pretty hard since yesterday."

"So we have; for that reason I could hardly venture a guess regarding how this race will come out."

All they could do was to keep urging their horses forward, and keep watch over their shoulders at the redcoats.

The sun came up presently.

It was possible to size up the situation pretty thoroughly now.

Dick took a careful survey, and then turned a grave face toward Bob.

Bob read the look aright.

"You think they have gained on us?" he asked.

Dick nodded.

"Yes, I think they have," he replied. "It seems to me that they are closer than they were."

"Yes, I think they are."

The youths said no more at the time, but they kept looking back frequently.

All the "Liberty Boys" were interested, but the feeling that animated each and every one was one of regret that they could not spare the time to stop and have it out with their pursuers.

They would have enjoyed engaging the dragoons in a battle.

There were about the same number of redcoats that there were of the "Liberty Boys."

It would have been a beautiful fight.

But what a Waterloo it would have been for the dragoons.

They no doubt imagined that because the "Liberty Boys" were running from them, they were afraid.

This was, of course, a great mistake.

The youths were as a whole regular dare-devils in combats of any kind.

They did not, individually or collectively, know the meaning of the word "Fear."

It was not in their vocabulary.

It was galling to them to have to flee before the redcoats.

It was something entirely out of their line.

"Say, Dick, let's stop and have it out with the scoundrels," said Bob, in a pleading tone of voice.

Dick shook his head.

"I don't wish to take the time, Bob," he said. "If we can eventually get away without having to stop and fight them, well and good. You see, we are going in the direction in which we wish to go, and are going at a good pace. This is all right, so long as they don't catch up with us, or

rather, so long as we are able to keep out of pistol-shot distance of them."

"That's right, Dick; we are making a dash for Fort Stanwix sure enough, aren't we?"

"I should say so! This is a race sure!"

Onward dashed pursuers and pursued.

The redcoats were urging their horses to their utmost speed.

Of course, they having no long, hard ride ahead of them, were not averse to forcing their horses; it was making it bad for the "Liberty Boys" in the respect that the horses were being worked too hard, with such a long journey ahead of them.

It could not be helped, however.

On went the race.

The clatter of the horses' hoofs on the ground sounded like distant thunder.

Presently the dragoons began giving utterance to yells.

"They see that they are gaining," said Bob; "the scoundrels! how I wish we might turn on them and give them a taste of our quality!"

"It would be somewhat of a surprise to them, I judge, Bob."

"Wouldn't it! Say, Dick, those fellows think we are afraid of them!"

"I suppose they do, old man."

"Of course they do. Say, Dick, let's stop long enough to bring them up standing, and teach them that we are not afraid of them—what do you say?"

Dick shook his head.

"Not yet, Bob."

Bob was disappointed.

He was eager to get at the redcoats.

He could hardly stand it to be chased in this fashion, and not attempt to strike a blow.

The other "Liberty Boys" were feeling much the same way as Bob was.

They were talking to each other and hoping that Dick would let them have a chance at their pursuers.

Their teeth were set, and there was a fierce expression on their faces.

It would be hard for the dragoons when the "Liberty Boys" should be given the liberty to turn on their pursuers.

On went the race.

Closer and closer, slowly but surely, crept the pursuing redcoats.

They gave utterance to yells frequently now, for they saw that they were gaining on the supposed fugitives.

It was well for them that they did their yelling in advance.

This idea was put in words by Bob.

"Yell, you redcoated scoundrels!" he grated; "yell now, for if we get a chance at you you won't have anything to yell for, and that's the truth!"

Dick could not help smiling, serious as was the situation.

He understood Bob thoroughly.

He knew just how galling it was to the youth to be in the position in which he and all the "Liberty Boys" were.

"Let them yell, Bob," he said quietly; "it does them good, and doesn't do us any harm."

"It does me harm," grinned Bob; "it makes me mad, I tell you!"

"Have patience, Bob; I think you will get a chance at the fellows before we are through with this."

"You think we can't keep them from catching up with us, Dick?"

Bob's tone was eager.

"That's is what I think, Bob."

Dick's tone was as grave as Bob's was eager.

Closer and closer drew the pursuing redecoats.

Louder and louder grew their yells.

They were now confident that they were going to be able to overtake the supposed fugitives.

And they no doubt thought they would have no trouble in putting the "Liberty Boys" to utter and complete rout.

They did not know that the hundred fleeing youths were the famous "Liberty Boys."

Had they known this they might not have been so eager to overtake them.

The bravery on one side is often in ratio to the fear or supposed fear shown on the other side.

The redcoats thought the "Liberty Boys" were afraid; consequently they were very brave.

Presently the sharp crack! crack! crack! of pistols was heard.

The dragoons were firing upon the youths.

The redcoats were a bit too far away yet, however.

The bullets fell short.

They struck the ground some fifty or seventy-five yards back of the "Liberty Boys."

"Oh, say, Dick! are you going to stand that?" asked Bob.

The other boys looked toward Dick with eager, expectant glances.

They were expecting to receive orders to turn and attack the redcoats.

They hoped to receive such orders, that was evident.

Dick saw the looks and understood them.

But he was not ready to give the order yet.

He was watching the pursuers' horses closely, and he believed he noted signs that the animals were becoming tired.

It might be possible to get away yet without having to enter into an engagement with the dragoons.

Dick hoped that such might be the case.

He had made up his mind to hold off till the last moment.

If the redcoats should get near enough so that the bullets from their pistols were likely to do damage, he would give the order to attack, and not before.

The pistols kept on cracking.

The redcoats were determined to do damage, if they possibly could, and they were in a hurry to do it, too.

They wasted a lot of powder and lead on this account.

Gradually they drew nearer the "Liberty Boys," however, and presently the bullets began striking the ground dangerously near to the targets aimed at.

The "Liberty Boys" cast eager, expectant looks at Dick.

They were anxious to get a chance at the dragoons.

Still Dick waited.

None of the bullets had yet done any damage.

He would wait until it became necessary to do something.

The redcoats lashed their horses in a reckless fashion.

They were eager to get all the speed out of the poor brutes that there was in them.

They drew still nearer.

And presently a bullet struck one of the "Liberty Boys," inflicting a rather painful flesh wound.

The wounded youth was almost knocked out of the saddle by the shock of the impact.

"Are you seriously wounded?" asked Dick, riding up alongside the youth.

"I don't think so, Dick," was the reply, "but I'm hurt bad enough so that if I don't get a chance to get even with those scoundrels I think I shall probably die as a result!"

This last was said in a sort of grimly humorous tone of voice, but Dick saw it would be hard on the youths if they were held in check much longer.

The youth knew how they were longing to turn the tables on the redcoats.

He looked back.

The redcoats were well within pistol-shot distance now, and had they been good shots might easily have wounded or killed a number of the "Liberty Boys" ere this.

If they got much closer they would surely kill and

wound a number of the youths, and this Dick would not permit.

He rode back to his place beside Bob, and said:

"I guess we shall have to teach those fellows a lesson, Bob!"

"Hurrah!" cried Bob, delighted; "whenever you say the word, Dick, we will turn and give them a surprise such as they are not looking for."

Dick glanced back.

He saw that the time had come to do something.

He looked around at his comrades.

He saw the eager light in their eyes, the eager, expectant look on their faces.

He knew that all he would have to do was to give the signal and then the "Liberty Boys" would act.

Suddenly Dick drew his sword from the scabbard.

He lifted it into the air and cried out in a loud, ringing voice:

"Halt!"

The "Liberty Boys" reined their horses back onto their haunches.

"Right about, face!"

Quickly the youths executed the movement.

They were expert horsemen, and their horses were well trained besides.

"Charge!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE INDIANS' PRISONER.

And the "Liberty Boys" did charge!

They had been wishing for the opportunity to do so for quite a while.

And now that they had received permission, rather than an order to do so, they were wild to act.

They drew their swords, and rode down upon the surprised and startled redcoats with the fury of an avalanche.

As they struck the line of the dragoons, the youths uttered wild shouts.

They struck out with their swords in a fierce manner.

The dragoons went down like tenpins—though to tell the truth many of them threw themselves off, or fell off their horses in order to escape the cuts and thrusts from the sabers.

The redcoats did give utterance to some shouts, even yet, but they partook more of the nature of yells of fright than of aught else.

The "Liberty Boys" went through the lines of the redcoats.

Then they turned and came back.

They scattered the dragoons right and left.

It was as if the fellows were chaff in front of a whirlwind.

The redcoats were taken completely by surprise in the first place.

They had not been expecting anything of this kind.

This made it all the easier to rout them.

And the "Liberty Boys."

It was wonderful the delight they took in turning the tables on their enemies.

Only a few moments before the redcoats had been chasing them; now they were scattering the redcoats.

"Turn about is fair play!" shouted Bob; "give it to them, fellows!"

And "give it to them" the "Liberty Boys" did.

It was a complete Waterloo for the redcoats.

It was all the worse for them because of the fact that they had not been expecting it.

When the youths were almost through the ranks of the redcoats and on their return dash, Dick called out:

"Keep straight on, boys! Don't turn around! We must not lose any more time. We have lost enough. Forward, and keep right on going!"

The "Liberty Boys" were very well satisfied now to let up on the redcoats.

They had taught the fellows a lesson.

A severe one, too.

And, strange to say, the "Liberty Boys" had escaped without losing a single man!

Several of the youths had been wounded, but not one had been killed.

Nor were any of them mortally wounded—none so bad, in fact, but they could sit on their horse and ride at a good pace.

The redcoats were too badly demoralized to continue the pursuit.

So Dick soon gave the order to slow up.

A little later, having made sure that the redcoats were not going to try to follow, Dick ordered a halt.

He made all the wounded youths alight and have their wounds dressed.

The stop had been made at a stream.

This made it easy to wash and dress the wounds, as there was plenty of water.

As soon as this had been done, the "Liberty Boys" mounted again and rode onward.

They wished to cover as much ground as possible before

the sun got up high, and it grew too hot to move at a rapid pace.

The horses were kept at a gallop till about half past ten o'clock.

The pace was slackened.

The horses were now very tired.

So were the youths, but they would not halt till noon.

As they had done the preceding evening, however, they began dropping off in half dozen bunches at the farm-houses they came to.

It was the only way to do.

They could not all stop at one place with any hope of getting enough to eat.

They could only do so by dividing up into small parties.

At last all had stopped for dinner.

When they had eaten, and their horses had had some feed, and sufficient rest, the "Liberty Boys" were on their way again.

They rode at as good a pace as the horses could keep up till well along toward evening, and then they did as they had done at noon.

An hour later, and they were moving again.

It was eat and dash away.

They did not lose any more time than was absolutely necessary.

The youths were seasoned to this sort of work.

They had been through so much that they were indeed tough.

Onward through the night they rode.

It was more pleasant than it had been during the day.

It was cool and pleasant.

When the moon rose, its welcome light aided materially.

It made it easy to keep to the road.

They rode onward till about three o'clock in the morning.

Then they stopped to get a few hours' rest and snatch a few hours of much-needed sleep.

They were up bright and early next morning, and rode onward.

They pursued their usual tactics of securing breakfast, by stopping in squads of half a dozen at farmhouses.

All that day they kept up the swift ride.

The horses were pretty well fagged out, but they kept at their work gamely.

When nightfall came, the youths were riding swiftly along, on a road which led through heavy timber.

An hour's ride brought the "Liberty Boys" out at the farther side of the timber.

A valley deep and wide lay at their feet.

The moon was just coming up, and the valley was bathed in a flood of yellow moonlight.

The party had come to a halt at the edge of the timber, and the youths were taking a survey of the scene in front of them.

Suddenly Bob uttered an exclamation.

"Look yonder, Dick!"

He pointed as he spoke.

"What is it, Bob?"

"A camp fire, Dick!"

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; look where I am pointing. You can see it for yourself."

Dick got closer to Bob, and looked in the direction he was pointing.

"See it?" asked Bob.

"Yes; you are right, I believe, Bob. That looks very much like a camp fire."

"It is one; I am sure of it."

Dick was silent a few moments, and then he said, musingly:

"I wonder who can be down there—who that would have a camp fire?"

"That is the question," said Bob.

"A hard question to answer, too," said Mark Morrison.

"How far away is the fire, do you think?" asked Dick.

"That's another puzzle," said Bob.

"I should say half a mile," said Mark.

"It is farther than that, I think," said Dick.

"Well, what are we going to do, Dick—go ahead, or stop and investigate?" asked Bob.

"We will ride down a ways," said Dick; "and then I think I shall investigate."

Dick gave the order, and the "Liberty Boys" rode forward.

It was quite a steep slope which led down into the valley.

But the youths did not ride fast.

They thought it would be best and safest to go slow, at least until it had been discovered whether or not danger lay ahead.

When they had gone perhaps a third of a mile, Dick gave the order to halt.

The "Liberty Boys" did so.

Dick now told the youths that he wished them to remain there until he returned.

"I am going forward to investigate that camp fire," Dick said. "Remain here till I get back."

"Better let me go along, Dick," said Bob.

"No, I will go alone," said Dick.

Bob grumbled a little.

"You may run into a trap, if you venture down there by yourself," he said.

"I don't think there is any danger, Bob."

"You don't know."

"No, I don't know."

"You'll be careful, old man?"

"Of course, Bob!"

Then Dick stole away in the direction in which he thought the camp fire was.

He made his way along softly, but at a good pace.

He did not wish to lose any more time than necessary.

He moved along a distance of two or three hundred yards.

Then he came to a point where he could look out between some clumps of bushes and see the camp fire they had caught sight of from the hilltop.

There was no heavy timber where Dick now was, but there was lots of bushes, and some trees.

The camp fire in question was about fifty feet from where Dick was concealed.

It threw considerable light.

Seated about the camp fire, engaged in cooking meat on the ends of sharpened sticks were a score or more of Indians.

Dick watched them for a few moments with interest. Suddenly he gave a start.

He nearly uttered an exclamation aloud.

In looking around he had suddenly espied a white man. The white man was a prisoner.

He was bound to a tree which stood at a little distance from the camp fire.

The thing which caused Dick the most wonderment was the fact that he knew the prisoner.

He was a young man with whom Dick had been acquainted several months before.

He was an officer in the patriot army—a lieutenant.

When last Dick had seen the young man, he was in New York.

What could he be doing out here in the central part of the State, a prisoner to the Indians?

Dick asked himself this question.

But he could not answer it.

Dick looked all around.

He thought that it was possible that he might see some more prisoners.

If there were more, they were not where they could be seen.

Dick now turned his attention to the lieutenant—Berwick, his name was.

The poor fellow looked forlorn indeed.

He looked down at the ground in a hopeless manner.

Evidently he felt that he was doomed.

Dick longed to give the prisoner some encouragement. It could not be done, however.

Dick was too far away to say anything, and the Indians would have heard him anyway.

Dick decided to investigate thoroughly and learn how many Indians there were in the encampment.

He began working his way slowly along.

He moved in such a way as to go in a half-circle, around the encampment.

Dick soon discovered that the score or so of Indians squatting around the camp fire were all there were of the Indians in the camp.

"A score of the red rascals," thought Dick; "we can easily put them to rout. I guess I had better go back and report to the boys and then we will come down here, rout the redskins, and then free the prisoner."

Dick slowly and carefully began working his way back around, so as to again get on the side of the camp toward where he had left the "Liberty Boys."

Just as he got back to where he had been when he first caught sight of the prisoner, Dick was startled by a move of the redskins.

They had finished their rude repast of cooked meat, and were preparing to have some sport at the expense of the prisoner.

At any rate, that was the way Dick figured it out, and he had had a good deal of experience with Indians and understood them pretty well.

The Indians had risen to their feet, and were lined up at a point perhaps ten paces in front of the prisoner.

As Dick watched, the Indians drew their tomahawks.

One of the Indians, who could doubtless talk some pigeon-English, must have said something to the prisoner, for the young lieutenant lifted his head.

As he did so, a tomahawk whizzed through the air, and struck and stuck into the tree within an inch of the white man's head!

CHAPTER VIII.

INDIAN CRUELTY.

"Great guns!" thought Dick, in dismay, "they are going to torture him."

As Dick spoke several of the Indians began bringing brush and piling it around the prisoner.

A thrill of horror went over the youth.

"Yes, they are going to burn the poor fellow at the stake—or at least make believe do so," thought Dick; "I

must interfere and prevent it, but how am I to do it? That is the question?"

Dick thought of trying to get back and bring the "Liberty Boys."

He quickly abandoned this idea.

He did not think he would have time.

The Indians would soon tire of throwing their tomahawks.

Then they would set the brush on fire.

Dick could not get to the "Liberty Boys" and back again quickly enough, he feared.

Dick noted that there was quite thick brush just behind the prisoner.

"Maybe I can slip around there, come up behind the poor fellow and cut his bonds, and assist him to get away," thought Dick.

It would be very hazardous.

But Dick felt that in this way Berwick would at least have a chance for his life.

The plan was worth trying.

Of course, it would be fraught with danger to the youth.

But this would not deter Dick.

He never stopped to count the danger to himself.

The Indians were now busily engaged in throwing their tomahawks.

There was considerable danger to the prisoner in this.

The Indians were expert in the use of the tomahawks, of course, but several of them threw their weapons at the same time frequently, and there was a likelihood that the weapons might strike together and be deflected from their course sufficiently to cause them to strike and brain the prisoner.

Lieutenant Berwick was evidently a brave man.

He faced the fusilade of the tomahawks unflinchingly.

He never opened his mouth to ask the Indians to not throw the weapons.

Perhaps he realized that it would do no good to ask them this or to dodge.

Indeed to dodge might bring about the very thing he wished to avoid.

The better way, no doubt, was to hold perfectly still and hope for the best.

Dick began making his way through the brush.

He worked his way around to a point almost directly in the rear of the prisoner presently.

This had taken some little time.

The Indians had now stopped throwing tomahawks.

They were getting ready to light the fire that was to burn the prisoner.

Dick crept cautiously forward.

He wished to get as close to Lieutenant Berwick as possible before the brush was fired.

He was not more than twelve feet from the prisoner when he saw an Indian brave take up a blazing firebrand and walk toward the brush, which had been piled around the white man.

"He's going to fire the brush now!" thought Dick.

He paused and watched the Indian as if fascinated.

Dick wondered if the red brutes really intended to torture the white man at the stake.

It seemed a horrible thing to think of, but the youth knew that the Indian allies of the British had committed some fiendish crimes in Central New York.

He made up his mind that the red demons really did mean to burn the prisoner at the stake.

This being the case, the youth's work was cut out for him.

He must manage to free Lieutenant Berwick in some manner.

As the Indian stopped in front of the white man, he looked the prisoner in the face, smiled in a fiendish manner, and said:

"Ugh! White man heap brave. Him no dodge when tomahawks be thrown at him head; now see if him howl when fire burn him!"

"You are not really going to burn me at the stake?" asked Lieutenant Berwick.

The young man's voice was steady, but there was an anxious tone to it.

The Indian nodded.

"That's what we are going to do!" he grunted.

"You—fiend!" the prisoner exclaimed. "If you dare do that the patriot soldiers will kill every one of you!"

The Indian shook his head.

"Injuns no 'fraid white sojers!" he said, stoically.

"You had better be afraid. My friends will search for me, and when they learn that you have tortured me to death, woe unto you. They will follow you day and night till they catch you, and they will kill each and every red brute who had a hand in this affair."

Dick could not but admire the grit of the young officer.

He did not break down and beg.

He was made of stern material.

The Indian, however, was impassive.

The prisoner's words seemed to have no effect whatever on him.

Some of his comrades called out something to him in the

Indian tongue, and he stooped over and stuck the firebrand into the pile of brush and fagots.

He remained in a stooping position, watching the brush and fagots kindle.

They presently leaped up into a blaze.

The Indian gave a grunt of satisfaction.

He started to rise up to an erect position.

As he did so, one of the feet of the captive came up like a flash.

It caught the Indian just under the chin.

He was straightened up very quickly and forcibly.

More, he was sent on over backward, and he went down on the ground with a crash, almost on top of some of his comrades who were squatting there, watching the kindling of the fire.

The prisoner had yielded to a sudden, fierce feeling of rage.

His legs had been left free, he being bound to the tree from the waist up only.

Knowing this he had made up his mind to have some satisfaction anyhow, and he had given the redcoat a kick that would make his chin sore for many a day.

Dick felt like shouting his approval.

"Good!" he thought; "Berwick is made of the right sort of material, sure. But the red scoundrels will torture him worse than ever now."

The redskin who had been upset lay still for a few moments.

He seemed to be dazed.

Several of his comrades leaped to his assistance.

They raised him to a sitting posture.

All the Indians began jabbering at a great rate in the Indian tongue.

Dick had no doubt that they were uttering threats.

The red brutes cast ferocious glances at the prisoner as they jabbered.

"Oh, jabber all you want to!" Berwick said, defiantly; "I had the satisfaction of upsetting the scoundrel, anyway!"

Dick felt that this would give him a good chance to slip up behind the prisoner.

He began slipping forward.

He stole along on his tiptoes.

He kept the tree between himself and the Indians as well as was possible.

The brush had now taken fire and was blazing up.

It was making considerable smoke also, and as the smoke was between Dick and the Indians, he was shielded somewhat by it.

Dick knew he was in great danger, however.

The eyes of the Indians were keen.

If they caught sight of him before he got a chance to cut the white man's bonds, all would be up with the poor fellow.

Dick would be unable to save him.

He would have all he could do—and possibly more—to save himself.

Dick was skilled in such work, however.

His work as a spy had been of incalculable value to him.

By the time the Indians had gotten their comrade who had received the kick to his feet and straightened up, Dick had succeeded in installing himself behind the tree to which the prisoner was bound.

The Indian was now himself again, save that his chin and jaw probably pained him greatly.

He was a mad Indian if ever there was one.

He drew his tomahawk, at the same time jerking away from his comrades, and then he leaped forward, straight toward the prisoner.

There was the look of a fiend on his ugly, painted face.

There was no doubt regarding his intentions.

He was going to brain the prisoner.

Berwick no doubt realized that he was standing face to face with death, but he did not flinch even then.

A cool, scornful smile appeared on his face.

It was evident that he courted the stroke from the tomahawk rather than otherwise.

It would be a much easier death than to die by torture.

And the prisoner had undoubtedly given up all hope of escaping with his life.

There could be no possible chance for this, he reasoned.

He could do nothing to help himself, and he could not think that there could be anyone near to help him.

Dick, who was watching around the side of the tree, saw the action of the Indian.

He made up his mind to try to turn the tomahawk aside with his sword, which he drew quickly and noiselessly.

This would be a difficult thing to do.

Indeed, it would be by the greatest good fortune if Dick succeeded.

He would have made the effort had there been need of it.

But there was no need.

Three or four of the Indians leaped forward like panthers.

They seized the infuriated Indian just in time.

In another instant he would have brained the prisoner—unless Dick had succeeded in keeping him from doing so.

The Indian struggled furiously.

He was angry at being balked of his revenge.

He uttered peculiar, fierce exclamations which, if there is anything of the kind in the Indian tongue, were oaths.

The braves who had leaped forward and seized him were talking also.

They talked loudly and rapidly.

Their tones were argumentative.

Doubtless they were telling him he was a fool for giving way to his temper, and explaining that he would have a much better revenge if he would wait and help torture the prisoner.

Doubtless they suggested that the stroke from the tomahawk would put the prisoner out of his misery in an instant, and that it would not afford much in the way of revenge, from the Indian standpoint, at least.

Anyway, the Indian presently ceased struggling.

Then after an interchange of a few more words the Indians released their comrade.

Doubtless he had given his promise that he would not attempt to brain the prisoner.

Meanwhile Dick had not been idle.

The brush and fagots were blazing up quite briskly now.

There was considerable smoke rising from the fire, caused by the damp leaves mixed in with the brush.

This smoke concealed Dick's hands, and he took the point of his sword and made ready to cut the prisoner's bonds.

First, however, he must warn the prisoner that he was there.

Dick bent around the tree, placed his mouth as close to the man's ear as possible, and whispered:

"Don't start or show surprise! I am a friend, and I am going to cut your bonds."

"Thank God!" came back the whispered reply.

Then Dick began cutting the prisoner's bonds.

This took perhaps half a minute.

The bonds dropped from around the prisoner just as the Indians succeeded in getting the angry brave calmed down.

The fire was now blazing up briskly.

A number of the braves were beginning to sing a peculiar, guttural song.

Just as Dick was on the point of giving the signal for his friend to leap out from where he was standing, the smoke was blown aside by a little puff of wind.

The prisoner could be plainly seen by the Indians, and Dick hesitated.

He thought it would be best to wait until the smoke again settled down between the prisoner and the Indians.

It soon did so.

At the same instant a wild yell went up from one of the braves.

He had noted the fact that the bonds had fallen away from the prisoner's body.

Dick realized that the time had come.

If the escape was to be made, it must be made immediately.

"Now!" exclaimed Dick in the prisoner's ear

CHAPTER IX.

THE ESCAPE.

At the word Berwick gave a leap and was out from among the blazing firebrands in a jiffy.

The Indians saw the movement.

They gave utterance to wild yells.

They darted forward with the intention of seizing the escaping prisoner or tomahawking him.

But he was too quick for them.

He had given up hope, and then had had it suddenly revived within him.

He would not let them catch him if he could help it.

He was eager to escape.

He caught a glimpse of Dick's retreating form.

He ran after the youth swiftly.

Dick led the way in a circling direction.

He wished to get back to where he had left the "Liberty Boys."

Lieutenant Berwick made good speed.

He quickly closed the gap between Dick and himself.

He felt that he was being led to safety.

After the youths came the redskins.

They were yelping like hyenas.

Their yells were enough to make the blood curdle in the hearers' veins.

That is, of the ordinary individual.

But Dick and the lieutenant were not ordinary individuals by any means.

They were not frightened in the least.

The only effect the yells had was to anger them, and make them long for the opportunity to put a stop to the yells.

On dashed the youth and the lieutenant.

And behind them came the Indians.

Dick and the escaped prisoner were both good runners.

So were the Indians.

It was diamond cut diamond in this respect.

The Indians could not gain on the fugitives, seemingly.

And neither could the youths gain on the Indians.

Dick was finally shaping his course so that he finally got headed toward the point where he had left his "Liberty Boys."

He hoped the Indians would keep on chasing himself and companion.

If they did so, they would meet with a warm reception when they struck the "Liberty Boys."

Of course, Berwick did not know there were a hundred brave youths near at hand, and he was hoping the Indians would give up the chase.

It did not take Dick and his companion long to reach the vicinity of where the youths were waiting.

As Dick drew near he uttered a peculiar, shrill, piercing whistle.

It was a signal which he always used on many occasions under such circumstances as the present.

The youths, on hearing it, would know that it meant for them to be ready to meet and repel foes.

They would be ready, Dick knew.

Berwick was surprised when he heard Dick give the signal.

He was a shrewd fellow, however.

He was sure the signal meant something of importance.

He soon learned that he was right in this matter.

Suddenly he and Dick found themselves in the midst of a host of dark forms, the same being human beings, evidently.

They were the "Liberty Boys."

"Indians, fellows!" cried Dick; "be ready to give it to them!"

The youths made no response, but there was no doubt that they would do their duty when the time came.

On came the redskins.

They did not suspect the presence of the "Liberty Boys."

The result was that when they were within a few yards of the youths, they were treated to an unwelcome surprise.

Crash! roar!

The "Liberty Boys" had fired a volley from their pistols.

As it was at close range, it did as much damage as it would have done had it been fired from muskets.

The Indians yelled now, sure—but their yells had a different sound from what they had had when they were chasing the fugitives.

"Charge!" cried Dick, in a loud, ringing voice.

The youths obeyed.

They charged upon the redskins with the fury of an avalanche.

This was more than the redmen had bargained for.

A number had been killed in the volley fired, and now the rest had no stomach to stand and take anything more.

With wild cries of fright and anger they turned and fled.

The "Liberty Boys" gave chase.

They were eager to make a good job of it, while they were at it.

They didn't like Indians anyway.

They didn't fancy any Indians, and they hated those who were in league with the redcoats.

They chased the redskins a hundred yards or so, and then at a whistle from Dick, stopped reluctantly and came back.

Dick now made himself known to Lieutenant Berwick.

The lieutenant was delighted when he learned that his rescuer was Dick Slater, the boy spy.

He shook hands with Dick, and thanked him earnestly for having saved his life.

"Don't mention it," said Dick, quietly; "I was only too glad to be so fortunate as to be able to render you aid."

Then Dick asked the young lieutenant how he came to be a prisoner in the hands of the redskins.

Lieutenant Berwick explained that he had been out with a scouting party, and had been captured while away from the party on a little expedition alone.

He explained further, that he was with a party of patriots under Arnold, and that the party was on its way to render aid to the garrison at Fort Stanwix.

This was a surprise to Dick.

A welcome one, however.

He was glad to know that there were others going to the rescue of the beleaguered fort.

He thought that it might be possible that some of them would be in time to save the fort.

He hoped so.

Dick asked Lieutenant Berwick if he could guide the party to where Arnold's force was; but the young officer said that he could not.

He had been brought quite a distance by the Indians, and he could not find the way back if he tried, he was sure.

Then Dick told him to remain with the "Liberty Boys," and the young man said he would do so, gladly.

The youths had an extra horse or two, that they had picked up when they had had the encounter with the British dragoons, so the lieutenant would not have to walk.

Having put the redskins to flight, there was nothing to be done where they were, so Dick gave the order for the "Liberty Boys" to mount.

They did so, and soon they were dashing onward, in the direction of Fort Stanwix.

They rode all the rest of the night, and stopped when daylight came.

Dick thought they must be not very far distant from their destination.

"Well," he said, presently, "the thing to do is to get breakfast for ourselves and feed for our horses. Forward, and drop out in squads of six at every farmhouse we come to."

They rode onward.

They dropped off at every house they came to, as Dick had instructed them to do.

An hour and a half later they were all together again.

They rode onward at a lively pace.

Dick had made inquiries at the house where he had eaten breakfast, and had learned that it was ten miles to Fort Stanwix.

This was good news.

Ten miles was not far.

They would soon be there.

Dick had made cautious inquiries regarding the location of the British who were having seige to Fort Stanwix, but he had not received much satisfaction.

He was of the opinion that the man of whom he had asked the questions was a Tory.

This explained why it had been hard to get anything out of him.

There were more patriots than Tories in this section, however.

And from one of these Dick Slater learned the approximate location of the British and Indians.

Dick did not wish to come into contact with the enemy at present.

He wished to reach and enter the fort.

Then he would be willing to have the enemy put in an appearance.

Dick diverged from the direct route he had been traveling.

He made a detour.

It was his intention to approach the fort from almost the opposite direction from that one which the British and Tories and Indians were.

Dick kept a sharp lookout for Arnold's force.

He would have liked to have joined it.

Then they could have made their way along together, and if they had come in contact with the enemy, they could have put up a winning fight.

But he did not see anything of Arnold or his men.

So Dick kept his "Liberty Boys" riding at a good pace in the hope that they might reach the fort in time.

Presently they came upon a man and a boy in the road.

The man was a farmer of the vicinity, and the boy was doubtless his son.

They were on their way to work in the field.

Dick reined up his horse, and the other "Liberty Boys" did the same.

"Will you be so kind as to tell me how far it is to Fort Stanwix, sir?" Dick asked.

"Et's jest a mile ter ther fort, sir, an' ye'll hev ter hurry ef ye git theer in time ter save ther fort frum ther redcoats an' injuns!" the man said.

As he spoke he pointed ahead, in the direction the youths were going, to indicate that they were going the right way.

He was evidently a shrewd man, for he had guessed that the "Liberty Boys" had come for the purpose of trying to save the fort.

"Forward!" shouted Dick, waving his hand.

Instantly the "Liberty Boys" dashed forward once more.

"We must reach there in time!" thought Dick! "it would be terrible if we were to arrive too late now."

He urged his horse to its best endeavors, and the other youths did the same.

It was a race now, for a fact.

It was a race against time.

It was a race to save the fort.

Onward thundered horses of the "Liberty Boys."

At last they came in sight of the fort.

They gazed anxiously toward it.

Would they get there in time?

Would they be able to save it?

Or would they fail?

Would all their efforts to get there in time go for naught?

They hoped not.

But they had fears.

They gazed all around, searching everywhere with their eyes for signs of the redcoats and Indians.

They saw none anywhere.

"It begins to look as if we have reached here in time, after all, Dick," said Bob.

Dick nodded his head.

"So it does, Bob," he replied.

Then they raced onward toward the fort.

As the people in the fort caught sight of the "Liberty Boys" and of the banner, which one of the youths unfurled to the breeze as they advanced, a great shout went up.

The people of the fort had recognized the youths by

the banner, which bore the words, in large letters, "Liberty Boys of '76."

Up to the gate of the fort dashed the hundred youthful horsemen.

The gate was opened wide as they got there, and they rode through, and into the fort.

As they did so a great cheer went up from the inmates.

"Three cheers for the 'Liberty Boys!'"

The cheer was given in a roar.

It was a mighty one.

It might easily have been heard half a mile.

The "Liberty Boys" came to a stop.

Dick leaped to the ground, and advanced to meet an officer who was advancing toward them.

"Is this Colonel Gansevoort?" asked Dick.

"It is," was the reply; "and you?"

"Dick Slater, at your service."

CHAPTER X.

THE FORT SAVED.

Dick spoke quietly, and without the least show of bravado, although he was aware that he was famous throughout the entire country as a scout and spy, and as captain of the "Liberty Boys of '76."

"Ah! I have heard of you, Mr. Slater, and I am glad to welcome you!" Colonel Gansevoort said, earnestly. "And how comes it you are here?"

"At the command of the commander-in-chief, sir."

"How great a distance have you come?"

"More than three hundred miles."

The officer was surprised.

"That was a long ride," he said.

"Yes, but we were determined to get here in time to save the fort, if possible, and I think we have succeeded. Have you been attacked?"

"Not yet."

"Good! Then we shall be here, ready to assist you when the enemy does make an attack!"

"The enemy is near," said the colonel; "we are looking for an attack at any moment."

"So I suppose."

"Yes; but now, you and your men must be very tired. I will have your horses taken care of, and you can go to the barracks and lie down and take a rest, if you wish."

"We will do so, sir, but will need but a brief rest. Be

sure and call us the instant the enemy comes in sight, and we wish to have a hand in the fighting."

"Very well."

The "Liberty Boys" dismounted, and their horses were taken in charge by the soldiers who had been in the fort when the youths got there.

The youths then went to the barracks, and entering, threw themselves down on cots and were asleep almost instantly.

They slept several hours.

When they awoke and came forth, they were surprised to learn they had slept so long.

Colonel Gansevoort explained that the enemy had not appeared, and knowing they needed rest, he let them sleep.

Dick was glad that he had done so.

They had certainly needed the rest.

They were feeling much refreshed now, however.

"Let the redcoats and Indians come!" said Bob; "we are ready for them! I feel as if I could whip a dozen of the scoundrels myself."

All the boys felt about the same.

Even those who had been wounded in the encounter with the dragoons were feeling fine, they said.

But the day slipped away, and the enemy did not appear. Colonel Gansevoort could not understand it.

"I did not think they would delay to attack so long," he said. "I am afraid they are waiting till dark. I wish I knew where they are, and what their intentions are."

"I'll tell you what you do," said Dick.

"What, Mr. Slater?"

"Let me go out on a scouting and spying expedition."

There was an eager look on Dick's face.

Colonel Gansevoort's face brightened.

"I should like it first rate if you would do so," he said; "but that would be asking too much of you, who have come so far to aid us."

"Not a bit of it!" said Dick; "I shall enjoy the work, and I wish to do all I can to help save the fort. I judge that the knowledge of the whereabouts and the intentions of the enemy would be of considerable interest and value to you."

"Indeed, yes, Mr. Slater. I would then know what to expect."

"Say the word, and I will go at once," said Dick.

The colonel looked undecided for a few moments.

He hesitated.

"You had better wait till after nightfall," he said.

"Why so?"

"It would be very dangerous to venture out in the daytime, would it not?"

"Oh, it would be slightly dangerous," said Dick; "but I am used to that. A scout and spy is always in danger, you know."

"Yes, I know that; well, go ahead if you like. I shall consider it a great favor; but be very careful. I should feel very badly if the commander-in-chief's favorite scout and spy should lose his life in going out to do work for me, and work which it would be only right that I should send one of my own men on."

"That is all right, Colonel Gansevoort," said Dick; "one can die but once, and if I should be killed while out on this expedition, I should die for a good cause."

"True," the commander of the fort acknowledged.

"I will go now," said Dick; "and I will return as soon as I have secured some information which I shall deem of value. It will likely be after nightfall before I return, however."

"Very well, Mr Slater."

It was now well along in the afternoon.

Dick made his way to the front gate but passed, and turned back.

"Is there a way to get out at the rear?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the colonel.

"I think I shall go out that way then," said Dick; "it will be safer. They may have scouts watching the front, and if they should see me come forth, they might lay for me and ambush me."

"True; well thought of. I don't see why I didn't think to suggest it. Come with me."

Colonel Gansevoort led the way to the farther side of the fort.

He approached a small gate.

It was barred, and a sentinel stood there.

"Open the door," the colonel said to the sentinel.

He obeyed.

The colonel seized Dick's hand and pressed it warmly.

"Good-by; be careful," he said.

"Good-by; I will do so," replied Dick.

Then he passed quickly through the gateway, and walked rapidly away.

"There goes a brave and noble youth, if ever there was one!" said Colonel Gansevoort half to himself, as he watched Dick.

Dick hastened away, going straight ahead till he was hidden from the view of those in the fort by the trees.

Then he turned sharply to the right, and began making a wide circuit.

It was his intention to go around the fort, and reach a point in front of it.

He walked quite rapidly now, for he did not think there was much likelihood that there would be scouts or spies around on that side of the fort.

He was mistaken in this, however.

An Indian scout was around there.

He had seen Dick emerge from the fort.

He had watched the youth approach, and enter the timber, and he stole along, slightly behind and to one side.

He kept his wicked, beady black eyes fixed on the youth.

There was a cruel look in those eyes.

Evidently the brave was only awaiting a favorable opportunity to attack the youth.

He glided along, keeping his eyes on the youth constantly.

The Indian had no idea that he had been seen by Dick, but such was the case.

Dick was an old hand at this kind of business.

He had not been engaged in scout and spy work so long without having learned a good deal.

Then Dick was well versed in the ways of the redskins.

He was up in all their tricks.

He had caught a fleeting glimpse of the brave as he slipped from one tree to another, and the sight had told Dick the whole story.

He knew he was being watched and followed by an Indian scout.

"He will attack me at the first opportunity," thought Dick.

Dick believed always, in having a disagreeable duty over with as quickly as possible.

He knew he would have to kill the Indian or be killed by him.

So he decided to have it settled as soon as possible.

He made up his mind to give the brave his opportunity.

Dick did so.

He purposely walked close to a clump of bushes.

The bushes would afford the Indian an excellent place to hide.

The Indians fell into the trap.

He saw by the direction Dick was going that he was going to pass near the clump of bushes, and he hastened around, and took up his position there."

He drew his keen-bladed scalping knife.

There was a cruel, cunning look in the treacherous eyes of the redskin as he watched for Dick.

Soon Dick appeared.

The youth was walking along at a very fair gait.

The Indian stole to the farther side of the bushes.

He took up his position there.

From this point he would be enabled to leap upon the back of the paleface.

That is, he would have been enabled to do so if Dick had not been aware of the fellow's presence there.

The Indian did not suspect that the careless-appearing young fellow was really on the alert.

He was to find it out, however.

Dick knew just where the Indian would be stationed.

So when he came opposite that point, he was on the lookout.

He had a hunting knife in his belt.

He had slyly loosened this so that a slight pull would bring it out.

He had acquired this faculty by assiduous practice.

It had been of great service to him on many occasions.

It had saved his life more than once, and it would be of great assistance to him now.

He saw the redskin leap forward with the leap of the panther when springing upon its prey.

Dick had his hand on the haft of the hunting knife.

He drew the weapon.

When the Indian was almost upon him, Dick whirled and leaped to one side.

And he did so, he evaded the knife thrust made by the brave, and delivered a counter thrust.

The Indian was unprepared for this.

He had not been expecting it.

The knife entered his heart, and he fell to the ground with a gasping groan, a death yell smothered on his lips.

A few struggles, and he lay still, dead.

"I hated to have to kill even an Indian," said Dick, sadly; "but I could not help it. There was no halfway course open to me; it was his life or mine, and I think my life the more valuable."

Then he wiped the knife blade clean on the grass, replaced it in his belt, and without another glance at the dead brave, walked onward.

He walked forward perhaps a quarter of a mile, and came to the edge of the timber.

He looked out across the open, and saw the British force under St. Leger.

To Dick's surprise, the camp seemed to be in a state of wild confusion and disorder.

He took note of the fact that small parties of Indians were moving away.

They were going in the opposite direction from the fort.

This proved that they were not going to attack.

"What can it mean?" Dick murmured.

Presently a young man who looked like he might be a Tory approached close to where Dick stood.

He hastened out from among the trees, and cried, in seeming excitement:

"What does it mean? What has happened?"

"The rebels are coming!" the young fellow cried, pointing in a direction away from the fort; "Arnold, with several thousand men is coming, and we will all be killed! We will have to flee for our lives!"

Dick did not know it at the time, but this was a shrewd trick which had been conceived by Arnold. The young fellow really was a Tory, but he had been captured by Arnold, and to save his life he had promised to come into the British and Indians camp and tell them the patriots were coming in force, and thus frighten them away from the fort. The ruse had succeeded admirably.

Dick realized that the enemy was fleeing, however, and that if the garrison of the fort was appraised of the fact, and could reach the spot quickly, the enemy could be put to complete rout.

He decided that it should be appraised of what had happened, and at once.

He leaped away back into the timber, as if frightened, and ran with all his might to the fort.

He was admitted instantly and told his story.

The soldiers and the "Liberty Boys" sallied out of the fort at once, and hastened toward the encampment of the British.

The redcoats left their cannon, and lots of small arms, and nearly all their baggage.

The rout was complete.

The British did not return to try to capture the fort.

The fort had been saved—and the "Liberty Boys" by their wild ride, and Dick, through his efficient work as a scout and spy, and his quick wit in coming and informing the garrison of the flight of the British, had done much to save the fort.

• THE END.

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